

Minutes, Bucksport Economic Development Committee - February 9, 2016

Attending: Peter Stewart, Jim Boothby, Frank Dunbar, Mark Eastman, Daphne Eyerer, John Paul Lalonde, Larry Wahl, Linda Plourde, Rich Rotella, and Paul Rabs. Code Enforcement: Jeff Hammond

Peter Stewart called the meeting to order; the January meeting minutes were reviewed. Linda Plourde will be away for next two months, so volunteer needed to take minutes.

Bill Tymoczko has resigned from the BEDC; Peter asked Rich Rotella to send him a note of thanks.

Foreign Tuition Students: Rich Rotella reported one of the developers looking at Wilson Hall thought there was potential for housing for exchange students. Larry Wahl said there could be 16 dorm rooms built, and possibly one on third floor; potential for 20 rooms. Jim Boothby reported he brought the exchange ideas to the School Board, and they don't dismiss the idea, but feel the expenses for the project come at a rough time; and they don't see asking the community with current issues. There would be travel, housing, supervision, dormitories, an administrator and recruiter/director overseas. Peter Stewart suggested some quick research on what other communities needed to start up with for money? Presque Isle, ME and China have started a program. Possibly an association with schools overseas could work. Jim Boothby said an overseas director would need \$115,000 to \$200,000 to start. Public schools can only send students with one year visas from other countries. The University of Southern ME is looking at starting a foreign high school. School Board is tabling it for now; but a partnership with a college is a possibility. MMA has students from Turkey who may have an interest in a high school program. Larry Wahl said the developer he has talked with could see renting the Wilson Hall space back to the RSU. There are no figures yet for development, but they are in constant contact. Jim Boothby suggested a small committee from BEDC be formed to look at a business plan – Larry Wahl concurred, as did Daphne Eyerer. Will place on next month's agenda.

Code Enforcement Officer: Jeff Hammond showed a video update on Wilson Hall – this is on YouTube now, and is 6 minutes long. He reports there is still serious work that needs to be done. The tower is still leaking and needs major overhaul of roof. Tower may have to come off. The overall structure is repaired now.

The Council approved the Appendix K changes, and DEP approved. Becomes effective Feb. 13. There will be a meeting of the Ordinance Committee on Feb. 25, and they will look at amendments to Chapter 6, which covers vendors on the waterfront and applies standards.

New flood maps are approved as of July 2016. Twenty-five panels of maps now (there were 4). New ones help to identify where buildings are located. A new ordinance will need to be done, then hold a public meeting. Peter Stewart asked why HOME, Inc. withdrew their cattle farm application, which was dismissed? Jeff thought they weren't prepared to go forward.

Jeff reported the Comprehensive Plan analysis is almost done. A public hearing will be coming. Next step is the goals and objectives. There is almost another year of work left to do.

Peter Stewart asked how the panels for the "center of universe" walkway area are coming. Jeff said they are moving along. Pat Ranzoni has been asked to offer one. Linda Plourde reminded Jeff they need to come to BEDC first, as we were responsible for their implementation; then go to Council.

YMCA Update: The Ellsworth Y has said no at this time to our request; Peter Stewart said Ellsworth needed to take a break from their many undertakings. Peter said we'll wait now for the budget, Tim Emery's retirement, etc. Bangor approached us, and are more interested in the fitness center at the mill site as a base. If we go forward this would come out of Rich's office. John Paul Lalonde asked if we approach Bangor if it would close us to Ellsworth. Peter said we might wait and see later if

Ellsworth might reconsider us. He said Ellsworth needs 12 to 18 months before they could look at Bucksport. A lot depends on if we want our Recreation Department to look at it. Larry Wahl said the East Maine Conference Seminary once housed the YMCA and YWCA.

Waterfront Vendors Update: Paul Rabs spoke as Chair of the Ordinance and Waterfront committees, who met on January 20. There was an opinion expressed (by Lisa Whitney) then that it was never the intent to have vendors on the waterfront. Ordinances would have to be looked at regarding licensing, land use, itinerant vendors, push carts, etc. Protections would be needed as to sanitation, vandalism, question on liquor, etc. George MacLeod has suggested pods on private property. John Paul said we ought to try the vendors, as it has been very successful in other communities. Jeff Hammond is working on ordinances and will present at the next meeting on Feb. 25. Committees are still looking at it, and urged citizens to come to the Ordinance meeting rather than the Council meeting, where this topic will be discussed at length. Linda Plourde asked how other towns handle this, and what about another lot, possibly on Main Street, that we own? Jeff Hammond said itinerant vendor licenses are needed, and an okay from the Police Dept. Then the Town Council decides where it is acceptable. John Paul asked "how long are the licenses for?" Jeff said 30 days, and the Town Clerk can re-issue them for a fee. Frank Dunbar asked if the same rules would apply on Main Street. Jeff said most ordinances say "not less than 200 feet away" from another business." Some business owners complain, but it could hurt OR help businesses, Frank said.

Electronic Sign Update: Lots of questions were asked on this from the Town Council, Peter Stewart reported. One question regarded accidents, and the Police reported no concerns. Cost of running the high school's sign is \$700/yr. The maintenance of the sign is run from the Superintendent's Office by Jane Marston. The Rt. 1 & 15 sign could be done by Rich Rotella. A statement of strong support for the sign was read from Paula Kee, which stated the primary purpose is to bring traffic into our town; and would also include Wednesday on Main events and ALL other events. It was noted that the Wednesday on Main group has a strong financial position.

Rich Rotella explained that the D.E.P. will not allow us to advertise ANY businesses in any way on this sign; so can't promote Darlings as the Wednesday sponsor, or any other. Daphne Eyerer asked if there would be a problem with artists who sell their products at our Arts Festival. Jeff Hammond said that is a public event, so it would be okay. Rich said the next step is for us to recommend and then to the Council for consideration. Peter asked if we recommend. Paul Rabs asked "what about a marketing analysis"? Mark Eastman asked "should we look at all the options first"? John Paul stated he believes we need a marketer to look at this – that we don't have enough information. He said the \$5,000 grant Wednesday on Main acquired would have to go back, but we can still ask for a re-allocation; it's not black and white (he serves on that committee). He and Mark both stated we want the best way to market the town. It was decided we would ask for research and not recommend the sign for now; Peter noted.

Food Hub: Dr. Tom Gaffney gave a presentation which began with him thanking the BEDC for our time and service to work on this committee. Dr. Gaffney has been a psychologist since 1983. He has volunteered on Bucksport's Healthy Communities for 16 years. In 1988 he began organic blueberry growing; and is now part of a Food Hub Coalition, which partners with MOFGA, the U of ME, Organic Agricultural Research, etc. in teamwork fashion. Dr. Gaffney passed out talking points, explaining the Food Hub would help families and communities. In our county there are 404 working farms. 50 per cent of these are less than 50 acre farms, and their total dollars earned per farm is \$25,000 or less. Waldo county has 633 farms, 42% has 49 acres or less; and 71 per cent make less than \$10,000. He suggests we reach out to struggling farms, and help them communicate and market. What will make it a viable farm? What do consumers want? What are the environmental implications, could food

Sources help schools, U of ME, etc. The organic movement greatly helps the environment as well as huge health benefits. Dr. Gaffney said the Food Hub movement wants to *ask Bucksport to be a leading partner. There would be no cost, but we can reach out to other towns/communities and provide leaders to help meet these people, offer support, and help plan.*

IF Bucksport takes the lead in this, other communities could join; and there are *attractive funding sources available*. The US Dept. of Agriculture, leading conduit for financing, helps with processors. There's funding for plants, teaching young people, teaching nutritional values, etc.

Bucksport Bay Healthy Coalition and the BHRC are excited about it; believing it would be helpful with health issues. We could consider a market or store – even artisans or services eventually. Dr. Gaffney pointed out this issue appeals to the younger generation, families, etc. As a state we are well branded – even known around the world; so we could use that for this program and community. Currently Cheryl Wixon and Jim Nichols (farmer from Stockton) are working on a commercial kitchen for marketing and distribution. They and Rich Doyle, Jim Boothby, Chris and Cameron Johnson, the Chamber of Commerce, etc. are on the committee with a goal to keep money in Maine, stimulate farming here, especially Organic agriculture. Currently 30 farms in Hancock and Waldo counties are involved.

Peter Stewart asked what is needed from BEDC. Dr. Gaffney would like Rich Rotella to be a Partner with them, and would need a recommendation from the Council for Bucksport to be behind the Food Hub with Rich as a liaison. All were in agreement, Peter will recommend to Council. Daphne Eyerer offered help with networking and contacts.

Heart and Soul: Rich Rotella reported there are now 45 people who have met on January 9 and 20. There are eight subcommittees. The next meeting is on Feb. 10 at High School Library. The goal is to have 200 people or more involved. There are currently 117 various groups in Bucksport; all of which could be a help and a part of Heart and Soul. Rich spends approx. 75% of his time on it.

New Business: Peter suggested we look at a new location for BEDC meetings, for more room for all the members and guests – possibly the Jewett School Conference Room. Linda Plourde asked for a current list of BEDC members for clarification, attendance, etc.

Rich reported that the salon “Blush” is back on Main Street; and he is showing a downtown building Feb. 10 for a possible name brand used clothing store. He is receiving other inquiries for downtown stores. The monument business formerly at the Industrial Park has moved to, and purchased, the old Industrial Packing Building on Rt. 15.

Meeting Adjourned.

submitted by Linda Plourde

Next BEDC Meeting is Scheduled for Tuesday, March 8 @ 5:00 pm

Jewett School Conference Room